

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STOCKH 02660 021513Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01

COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-03 NRC-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4806

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ENRG, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDISH PARLIAMENT APPROVES GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY PROGRAM

REF: (A) STOCKHOLM 0665

(B) STOCKHOLM A-59

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE SWEDISH RIKSDAG (PARLIAMENT) APPROVED THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED ENERGY PROGRAM EARLY MAY 28 FOLLOWING AN ALL-NIGHT DEBATE. IN THE VOTING THE MODERATE PARTY SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS, WHILE THE CENTER AND COMMUNIST PARTIES VOTED AGAINST. THE KEY VOTE -- A CENTER PARTY PROPOSAL TO HALT FURTHER NUCLEAR POWER EXPANSION -- WAS REJECTED BY THE RIKSDAG BY A VOTE OF 192 AGAINST WITH 98 IN FAVOR.

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PAGE 02 STOCKH 02660 021513Z

2. THE ENERGY PROGRAM CALLS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT NEW REACTORS IN ADDITION TO THE FIVE ALREADY IN EXISTENCE, FOR A TOTAL OF 13. THE RIKSDAG HAD ALREADY APPROVED THE ULTIMATE CONSTRUCTION OF ELEVEN REACTORS, BUT THIS DECISION HAD BEEN CHALLENGED BY ANTI-NUCLEAR POWER ENVIRONMENTALISTS (REF A). THE QUESTION OF FURTHER EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER IN SWEDEN HAD AROUSED INTENSE DEBATE, AND HAD DIVIDED THE PARTIES ALONG UNUSUAL LINES, WITH THE CONSERVATIVE MODERATE PARTY SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE THE LARGEST OPPOSITION PARTY, THE CENTER, JOINED WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN OPPOSING FURTHER NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. THE LIBERAL PARTY, WHICH HAD SUPPORTED THE CONSTRUCTION OF 11 REACTORS, BALKED AT THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ADDITIONAL TWO, AND THEREFORE MOST OF THE PARTY'S 34 M.P.'S ABSTAINED IN THE VOTING. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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3. IRONICALLY, THE VOTE COMES AT A TIME WHEN OPINION POLLS INDICATE THAT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FURTHER NUCLEAR POWER EXPANSION IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER THE SAFETY OF NUCLEAR REACTORS AND THEIR POTENTIAL EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. LEADING THE ANTI-NUCLEAR POWER CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN CENTER PARTY LEADER FALLDIN, WHO HAS CONCENTRATED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON THIS ISSUE IN RECENT MONTHS. WHILE PRIME MINISTER PALME CLEARLY HAD THE EDGE OVER HIS CENTER OPPONENT IN THE RIKSDAG DEBATES ON NUCLEAR POLICY, THIS MAY BE OF QUESTIONABLE SATISFACTION TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN VIEW OF THE STRONG PUBLIC SENTIMENT AGAINST NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, IN A TELEVISION STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE VOTE, PRIME MINISTER PALME EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE SWEDISH PEOPLE WILL RECOGNIZE THE WISDOM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO MEET THE NATION'S ENERGY NEEDS. TO ACHIEVE THIS END, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S WELL ORGANIZED MACHINERY HAS BEEN PUT INTO OPERATION TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT BY THE TIME THE SEPTEMBER 1976 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE. STRAUSZ-HUPE

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PAGE 03 STOCKH 02660 021513Z

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